

INDIANA EDUCATION REFORM

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Indiana Students and Parents Score Biggest Win In Legislative Session

By the Indiana Department of Education

Indiana legislators have succeeded in passing the most comprehensive education reform package in the nation. Today marked the end of the 2011 legislative session, and every component of the state's "[Putting Student First](#)" education agenda has either been signed or awaits the governor's pen. In addition, state leaders provided more money for education and passed legislation to encourage innovation and focus resources where they can best serve children.



"Years from now, we will look back on 2011 as the year Indiana did more to improve education than any other state in the nation," Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. Tony Bennett said. "Indiana's legislators should be proud. They have given educators new opportunities and freedom to drive student achievement and empowered parents to provide the best opportunities for their children."

The "Putting Students First" agenda increases flexibility for school leaders, provides professional recognition and compensation for Indiana's teachers, and empowers parents with more high-quality educational options for their children. **Increased Flexibility for School Leaders.** Senate Bill 575 empowers school leaders to drive innovation and improvement in their schools by focusing teacher contract negotiations on salaries and wage-related benefits. Additionally, the new law will eliminate seniority-only provisions in teacher contracts that force school leaders to lay off teachers with the least seniority first—regardless of their effectiveness in the classroom.

Professional Recognition and Compensation for Teachers. Senate Bill 1 provides teachers meaningful annual feedback with multifaceted evaluations that consider student learning as one of many factors. The law also gives teachers the opportunity to be recognized and rewarded for their efforts in the classroom. For the first time, teachers will receive pay increases based on their level of responsibility, students' needs and their effectiveness—instead of just based on their years of experience and/or the additional degrees they earn.

More High-Quality Options for Parents. Access to a great education should be every child's right in this country. House Bill 1002 and House Bill 1003 provide options for families whose children's needs are not met in the traditional public school setting. HB 1002 allows for more entities to sponsor charter schools throughout Indiana and increases accountability for all charter schools. HB 1003 provides needs-based scholarships (vouchers) to qualifying families who wish to send their children to participating non-public schools.

"Our legislators did more than transform education policies in Indiana; they also passed a school funding plan that is aligned to our goals for Hoosier students," Bennett said. "These policy and funding reforms come together to dramatically improve our system of schools and give educators and parents every opportunity to increase academic success for every student."

House Bill 1001, Indiana's new biennial budget, uses above-expected state revenues to fully fund the state's full-day kindergarten grant, create a new teacher performance fund to reward great teachers, and increase overall K-12 funding. Moreover, the budget includes provisions to help guide the state as it prepares to fulfill a statutory requirement (Public Law 221) to turn around chronically failing schools.

Other education bills emerged from the legislative session without much fanfare but go a long way to focusing state resources and encouraging local innovation. Senate Bill 127 transfers responsibility for



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drivers' education and motorcycle education programs from the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) to the Bureau of Motor Vehicles.

House Bill 1429 broadens the definition of a textbook to include computers, software and digital content. It also gives locals more authority to select the best instructional materials for their students by eliminating a requirement that forces districts to choose their materials from a list of approved materials created by the State Board of Education.

House Bill 1341 is a victory for special education students and their families. The bill allows special-education dollars to follow students no matter where they are enrolled, be it a public or private school.

Finally, House Bill 1340 transfers Career and Technical Education from Indiana's Department of Workforce Development (IDWD) to the IDOE—and transfers adult education and the state's GED program to IDWD and an appointed council.

"From top to bottom, it's a new world for Indiana schools, and there will no longer be any excuses for failing our students," Bennett said. "Teachers, administrators, and parents now have all the tools needed to make sure every child's educational needs are well met. IDOE will continue to collaborate with and provide support to local schools as they begin to implement these changes."

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